

Chronic Disease Indicators: Indicator Definition



Life expectancy at birth

Category:	Overarching Conditions
Demographic Group:	All resident persons.
Numerator:	Not applicable.
Denominator:	Not applicable.
Measures of Frequency:	Life expectancy. (Life expectancy at birth is the average number of years to be lived on the basis of a given set of age-specific death rates.)
Time Period of Case Definition:	Lifetime.
Background:	In 2001, life expectancy among U.S. residents was 77.2 years. Life expectancy has been increasing steadily since records have been kept in the United States. Life expectancy varies substantially by sex, race, and ethnicity.
Significance :	Life expectancy at birth measures health status across all age groups.
Limitations of Indicator:	Causes of changes in life expectancy at birth are not readily identifiable.
Data Resources:	Data used to estimate death rates from which life expectancy is determined include death certificate data from vital statistics agencies and population estimates from the U.S. Bureau of the Census or suitable alternative.*
Limitations of Data Resources:	Reporting of age at death varies in quality, especially for older persons.
Healthy People 2010 Objectives:	No objective.

* See Arias E. United States life tables, 2001. Hyattsville, MD: US Department of Health and Human Services, CDC, National Center for Health Statistics, 2004. National vital statistics reports, vol 52, no. 14.
http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr52/nvsr52_14.pdf